

Air Force Contract Let For Flying Saucer Study

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CPYRGHT

The Air Force, bewitched, bothered and bewildered by UFOs for about 20 years, is farming out the flying saucer business to the University of Colorado.

A \$330,000, 15-month contract between the Air Force and the university was signed late yesterday at Boulder, Colo., and the project's director, Dr. Edward U. Condon, was to outline plans for a UFO study at a news conference in New York today.

UFO stands for unidentified flying objects, which have been reported zipping around in curiously un-aerodynamic fashion for the last two decades.

The Air Force has been investigating UFOs under a program code-named "Project Blue Book," which has been criticized by many UFO believers as lacking in candor.

According to an Air Force spokesman here, Condon's group will "analyze all the phenomena associated with UFO sightings and will review the Air Force's methods of receiving, investigating and evaluating the reports."

The Colorado group will "investigate certain selected sightings," and will have a "completely free hand" in this respect, the spokesman said. Asked whether the investigators will possess quasi-legal powers such as that of subpoena and the taking of sworn testimony, he said no.

The contract was described as "more or less open-ended," meaning that the \$330,000 is not necessarily regarded as the total amount that may be spent in probing the saucer mystery. The spokesman expressed the belief that an extension of the 15-month contract is quite possible.

Work will begin Nov. 1, the Air Force said. A report is supposed to be rendered to the Air Force Office of Scientific Research by early 1968, "but may or may not be the final report."

Condon was the center of a scientific furor in 1948 after a subcommittee of the House Un-American Activities Committee

called him "one of the weakest links in our atomic security." His security clearance subsequently was lifted and then restored.

An atomic scientist, he formerly was the director of the National Bureau of Standards and later research director for Corning Glass Works.

There were pressures last spring for a congressional investigation of UFOs after a flurry of reported sightings of mysterious objects.

House Republican Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan had called for a congressional study of the matter, and later Air Force officials promised that a scientific panel of civilians would be given the opportunity to make an independent investigation.

A resolution authorizing the House Armed Services Committee to conduct an investigation and study of reports of unidentified flying objects was referred to the Rules Committee in May.

The Rules Committee has given no indication whether it intends to act on the resolution before Congress adjourns. The

resolution was sponsored by Rep. Edward Hutchinson, R-Mich.

In addition to the Colorado University study, the Air Force said the National Academy of Sciences has indicated its willingness to appoint a panel which would review the Colorado report when it is completed.

"This panel will not be part of the investigating team, but will provide a further independent check on the scientific validity of the method of investigation," the Air Force said.

Since 1948 the Air Force has received about 11,000 reports of UFO sightings. Of these, the Air Force says, it has been able to identify or otherwise explain the nature of all but 655.

To date, the Air Force says its "firm conclusions" are that no UFO has ever given any indication of threat to national security. Nor, it says, has any evidence come forth that sightings which it categorized as unidentified are spacecraft from other planets.

The Air Force said the university's research will not alter the Air Force's responsibilities of receiving, investigating and evaluating UFO reports.